



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
August 30, 2006

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**SENATE APPROVES EXPANDED ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION FOR ALL STUDENTS**  
***Initiative Proposed by Governor, Sponsored by Sen. Cherry, Provides \$4,000 Scholarship***  
***for All Students Seeking Post-Secondary Education***

LANSING - The Michigan Senate today approved legislation to expand the Merit Scholarship program and help make it possible for all Michigan students to continue their education beyond high school. The \$4,000 New Merit Award scholarship, proposed by Gov. Jennifer Granholm and sponsored by Sen. Deb Cherry (D-Burton), will now be available to every student seeking to earn a 2-year college degree, technical certification, or a four-year degree.

"With passage of this legislation, a college education will no longer be just a dream for some, it can become a reality for all of Michigan's students," Sen. Cherry said. "This funding will motivate students who didn't think they could afford college to continue their education, as well as help students become prepared to compete in the job market of the 21st century."

The previous Merit Award offered up to \$3,000 only to those high school graduates scoring well on standardized tests. Under the new plan, students with acceptable test scores would receive \$2,000 for their first two years of college and another \$2,000 after the student satisfactorily completes half the requirements for a bachelor's degree, receives an associate's degree or a two year certification. However, students who do not meet the required test scores are still eligible for the full award upon meeting the same requirements.

The legislation was introduced by Sen. Cherry in June as a direct response to the central recommendation of the Cherry Commission on Higher Education and Economic Growth. The Commission, headed by Lieutenant Governor John Cherry, concluded that post-secondary education must be universal in Michigan to help improve our economy.

"Not only is this a tremendous incentive for students to continue their education, but it will assure a well-educated workforce who will be able to secure well-paying jobs," said Sen. Switalski (D - Roseville), a cosponsor of the legislation. "That benefits us all."

The measure now moves to the House of Representatives where it is up to the Republican Leadership to schedule a vote.

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